

Connect

supporting student participation

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In
this
issue

- Students' Voices: Student Leadership in Primary Schools
- A Student Action Team: Investigating and Supporting
- Year 9 Motor Mechanics Journey
- A Beginning Teacher's Diary
- ruMAD Checklist
- Resources: *Designs on Learning; Children's Research Centre; School Leadership and Governance; Council Review; National Leadership Camp; Form One Lane Seminars*

& Incorporating the PASTA Newsletter #42

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Number 152; April 2005

- 3 **Students' Voices:**
Student Leadership in Primary Schools
Woodville PS, SA *Kaye Johnson*
- 9 **A Student Action Team:**
Investigating and supporting
St Charles Borromeo PS, Vic *Sue Cahill*
- 10 **ruMAD? Checklist** *Adrian Bertolini*
Form One Lane *David Mould*
- 11 **PASTA Newsletter #42**
- 11 **Pass the PASTA** *Ken Page*
- 12 **Using Group Activities: 2** *Charles Kingston*
- 13 **Raising the Profile** *Ken Page*
- 14 **USA to OZ Exchange Visit 2005** *Ken Page*
- 15 **Year 9 Motor Mechanics Journey**
Kambrya College, Vic *Martin Rogers*
- 18 **Investing in Australia's Future** *Bec Heinrich*
- 19 **A Beginning Teacher's Diary** *Yvonne Wardlaw*
- 22 **NEWS AND REVIEWS:**
Designs on Learning; School Leadership and Governance;
Children's Research Centre; Learning for Activism; Teenage
Governor; Victorian School Council Review
- 23 **CLEARINGHOUSE:** Local and Overseas
Publications; Documents Available; Friends of *Connect*
- 24 **ORDER FORMS:** Subscriptions, Materials

Why does *Connect* exist?

Connect has been published since 1979.

It aims to:

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

Cover:

Students from Woodville Primary School, SA

Photo from students' web presentation

Connect:

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This Issue:

There seems to be a substantial wave of interest at the moment in approaches in primary and secondary schools that enable students to have a real voice - and decision-making power - in significant and important issues.



In March, there were waiting lists for participation in two workshops in Adelaide to look 'beyond traditional Student Councils' at Student Action Teams and similar approaches. Several clusters of schools in Victoria are adopting similar models for their work. Welfare consultants in New South Wales were interested to hear of participatory curriculum-based means of enhancing student decision-making late last year.

Publication is also noted of the book **Children Taken Seriously: in theory, policy and practice** (ed. Jan Mason and Toby Fattore; Jessica Kingsley Publishers - London; distributed in Australia through Footprint Books: www.footprint.com.au) with many examples of active participation of children and young people - from a children's rights perspective.

These examples provide strong evidence of a desire to go beyond tokenism - to talk about how power relationships change when we both challenge and trust young people ... and to talk about how we challenge existing classroom and school practices. We all benefit.

In this issue, articles blur the boundaries between 'governance' and 'curriculum' - particularly in accounts of different approaches and structures within two primary schools. At the same time, the report of a secondary college program (a 'Journey') documents the ways in which 'real world' boundaries can be pushed to focus on purposeful learning with real and valued outcomes. And a beginning teacher reflects - through a diary - on the start of a journey (with all its doubts and exhilaration) towards approaches that support students to transform their world as they learn.

Riding this wave, *Connect* continues to pursue plans to compile and publish a book of articles from recent years around the theme: **Student Councils and Beyond**. We're getting close to going to print on this and the next issue of *Connect* should advertise availability and cost. There's already been strong interest in this when we've mentioned it in various forums.

This book will be a living and growing work of documentation and reflection - not a 'historical document'. For example, articles from this issue of *Connect* are being included in that book. And we're always looking for more - for your stories. Reflect, write, share!

Quoting or paraphrasing again: "If you haven't written it up, you haven't finished the project!"

Roger Holdsworth

NEXT ISSUE: #153: June 2005

Deadline for material: end of May, 2005

Students' Voices

Student Leadership in Primary Schools

My story relates a three-year journey of establishing structures to promote student participation.

I assumed the principalship of Woodville Primary School in Adelaide following the retirement of a principal at the end of 2000, who was well respected by the parent community and very popular with both staff and students. Woodville Primary School, which was more than 120 years old, had a long and proud history of outstanding academic, cultural and sporting achievement. Further, it was well known for its inclusive approach to education, having provided schooling for deaf and hearing-impaired children for more than 45 years.

A need for any change was not widely recognised within the school community, with many parents and staff actively opposed to anything that could be seen to undermine Woodville's traditional ways of operating. Parents feared that I would introduce innovations from my last school, such as students calling teachers by their first names, student committees, abandoning school uniform and abolishing school sirens.

Helpful factors

There were, however, significant factors which enabled critical reflection of the school's philosophies and practices. These included:

- the school's participation in the Learning to Learn network;
- the appointment of an assistant principal with responsibility for children in their first years of schooling;
- the system-wide changes to local school management, Partnerships 21 (P 21);
- the introduction of a new curriculum: the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA).

With the active support of the deputy principal, Woodville had been accepted as one of the participating schools in the Learning to Learn network in January 2000. This network, which was based on earlier DECS (Department of Education and Childhood Services) school reform initiatives, focused on implementing learning theories from current international research. Its core work was to enable staff from participating schools to access the most recent thinking about teaching and learning, and to examine their classroom practice on the basis of their new insights. Because of its obvious links with engaging students in the learning processes, this project was a solid foundation for commencing dialogue with staff at Woodville about the role of students in their school.

The appointment of an assistant principal in July 2000 highlighted the importance of each child's early years of schooling and provided the impetus for the analysis of current methodology. The acknowledgment of each child's prior learning, and the need to construct learning experiences that valued this, has explicit links to the participation of children in their schooling. The focus on the learning needs of young children was central to commencing the debate with staff and parents about ways of including children in decision-making about their learning and their school.

Although Woodville did not elect to enter the initial round of P21, DECS' state-wide introduction of local school management in 2000 challenged current understandings of the relationships between parents, staff and students. In describing students as partners in the management of their school and their learning, this model made student participation explicit and provided the basis for debate about the roles of students in schools.

The introduction of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework (SACSA) in 2001 coincided with my appointment to Woodville and signalled to the community that DECS required curriculum change. The framework's organisation around five essential learnings (futures, identity, interdependence, thinking and communication) provided clear connections to students playing more active roles in their learning and democratic decision-making. SACSA built on staff professional development as a result of Learning to Learn, increased knowledge of the abilities of young children and new understandings of student-teacher relationships. It was also this framework that gave me permission to suggest changes to "the way we have always done it at Woodville".

I brought with me seven years of learning to work in partnership with children. My experience at my previous school had taught me that adults often underestimate children. I had many examples of children's perception, wisdom, ability to articulate their beliefs and commitment to following projects through. When questioned by staff or challenged by parents, I was able to share authentic stories of children's skills and sincerity. My learning with staff and students at my previous school gave me the assurance

that our experiments at Woodville to find new ways of working together would be successful.

Strategies for creating change

I adopted three intertwined strategies to begin the long process of change with staff at Woodville. The first was deliberately planned staff professional development. The second was the simultaneous restructuring of staff meetings to promote active staff participation in decision-making and the third was to redirect the school's focus onto students.

Because the school's agreed priority for 2001 was that all staff would become familiar with the SACSA framework, our resources (time, financial, and human) were allocated to support professional development activities. I was aware that the new framework would challenge many teachers to view curriculum as more than content to be delivered to students. I was further aware that the reorganisation of learning under the knowledge, skills, dispositions and abilities known as Essential Learnings within SACSA, rather than solely under traditional subjects, would question long-held practices. The processes used in all professional development activities were based on sound constructivist theories and could be adapted for implementation with younger learners. During weekly meetings staff explored the philosophy underlying the new framework; examined the documents; trialed aspects of them in their planning, teaching and evaluation and shared their experiences with their colleagues.

This emphasis on professional debate required a significant change to the school's culture and the ways in which staff contributed to staff meetings. Some of the tactics used to bring about a culture of collaboration included:

- establishing a group of staff to plan staff meetings and to publish agendas to inform staff of the processes and purposes prior to each meeting;
- reaching agreement on the professional codes of conduct at staff meetings (eg attendance for

the entire meeting, punctuality, participation in all aspects, demonstrating support for colleagues);

- specifically introducing co-operative activities and modelling teaching methodologies that could be used with children;
- negotiating protocols to enable all staff to raise issues and participate in decision-making.

While most staff readily contributed to these new ways of working, some were reluctant to engage in any of the collaborative processes, did not wish to discuss professional issues in small groups with their colleagues and protested about changes being introduced to fulfil DECS requirements. During my first year at the school, several of those teachers resigned. However, after three years of refining staff participation in the daily operation of the school, as well as constructing the school's vision, and in goal setting, most staff are now highly skilled participants in their own learning and in sharing the educational leadership of the school.

The third tactic concurrent with professional development and developing a collegiate culture was ensuring that children's needs were central to everything that was done at Woodville. Each year a slogan has been adopted to make our focus visible to parents, staff and students as well as members of the wider community. With the implementation of the new curriculum framework in 2001 our theme was "The Essential Learnings... improving learning for all students". The following year, as we focused on resilience and anti-bullying, the slogan was "Pupil welfare and learning". In 2003, as we sought to link all the previous programs and professional development with our values, it was "Making the connections".

Strategies for promoting student participation

In my first year at Woodville, I elected to work with staff members to ensure they all knew about participatory structures and had experienced the benefits of engaging with others in collaborative work. In the following year, I adopted a controversial strategy by allowing the existing student participation processes to fade.

When I arrived at Woodville, I discovered a student representative council (SRC) that was managed by one staff member. This teacher had accepted this responsibility for the past three years and was passionate about the importance of students having a say about aspects of the school. As well as the release time from other teaching duties, this teacher volunteered many of her lunchtimes to work with students. However, there were significant problems with the functioning of the SRC.

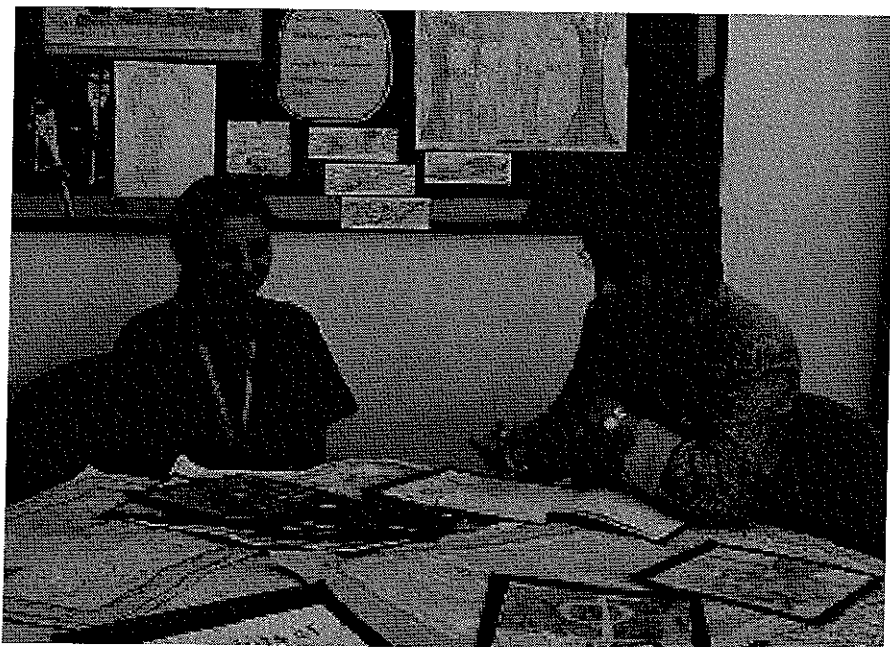
The first problem concerned the lack of support shown by the teachers. They had little connection with the SRC other than sending their class representative to weekly meetings. They did not provide their classes with time to discuss suggestions or to provide feedback to the SRC. Further, several staff regularly complained about the involvement of students during class time because they were "missing out on their learning".

The second problem was the limitation of SRC business to subjects on which the adults believed that students should comment. Participation in school governance was restricted to electing student representatives to existing decision-making structures that had limited terms of reference (see Hart, 1997; Morrow and Richards, 1996; Wyse 2001). They were able to plan for special days on which school uniform was not to be worn and to promote ways of reducing the litter in the schoolyard. There was little room for students to be innovative and to raise issues that were of importance to them.

The third problem, which was perhaps the most fundamental, was the lack of student engagement with the SRC. Although each class had a representative, the process for selecting these students determined the candidates. Younger students were threatened by the required formality of candidates presenting speeches prior to a secret ballot. Because of the resulting lack of candidates, many classes had their representative nominated by the teacher. Older students excluded themselves from the process knowing, from

their previous experience, which of the more popular students was likely to be elected. Further, the organisation of SRC was hierarchical; it operated with an executive of older students under the nominal leadership of male and female presidents.

For these reasons, the SRC was counterproductive in enabling the majority of students to speak about their learning and their school. In spite of this, the decision to let the SRC lapse could have conveyed to students, staff and parents that student participation was not valued. This, of course, would have been contradictory to our espoused focus on student welfare and learning.



While allowing the previous student participation structures to fade, I gradually introduced new ways of allowing many students to share their comments about the school and to demonstrate their learning. This included inviting students in Years 4 and 5 to train to become school 'ambassadors'. The ambassadors welcomed visitors and took them on tours of the facilities during which they talked about their school. Students from each year level actively participated in talking about their learning by demonstrating aspects of their work to the parent community at the school's Annual General Meeting. All students acted as ambassadors for their parents on the school's Acquaintance Night. We introduced reporting processes that required active student involvement. Students contributed to interviews and also presented, in non-written form, an aspect of their learning to an authentic audience. Students also provided written comment about their academic and social progress as part of the reporting process.

At the same time as the trials of these initiatives, several staff members were released to visit other schools to talk with students and teachers about other ways of promoting student voice. Teachers reported back to their colleagues at whole staff meetings. Several staff professional development sessions took a critical look at these and other ways of increasing opportunities for students to play central roles in the daily operations of the school.

The replacement of the SRC with these alternatives allowed more students to share their experiences of schooling with a variety of audiences. The student participation initiatives also engaged all teachers working with their classes. However, the structures were largely adult-initiated and there were no formal and visible protocols for students to make suggestions or raise concerns. The winning of a Values Education Study grant from the federal government in 2003 enabled us to create new ways of working with students based on our school's values of respect, mutual trust, fairness and social cohesion.

We held a Kids' Conference week during which children were regrouped into smaller multi-aged groups working with different staff members to learn co-operative skills and ways of making the values explicit. The week culminated in a social cohesion day. Prior to the Conference Week, a small group of volunteer teachers was released to compile and "launch" a resource booklet of games and activities designed to teach specific behaviours. This acknowledged staff workload, supported staff members who did not have experience in working in these ways with students, encouraged congruence of expectations and promoted the importance of explicitly teaching the attitudes and skills to enable students to work well in groups.

An outcome of the Kids' Conference was the establishment of playground observations by volunteer staff and students. The observations indicated how far the values had been transferred from the classroom to the playground. As a result of feedback from students and staff reflection on this data, student action groups, known as Values in Action (VIA), were formed. The focus of these groups was to allow students to initiate changes they would like to see, rather than have them respond to problems. The emphasis was on creating rather than resolving issues. Students were selected, using a method agreed on by the children in their classes, to be members of VIA for the remainder of the year. Two volunteer staff members met with each group every fortnight. Initial reflections on VIA identified the benefits as:

- the provision of formal and visible structures of student participation;
- an increase in the number of students meeting at VIA (there were 84 involved);
- the increased number of staff taking responsibility for the facilitation of these groups (there were 8);
- a range of topics generated by VIA (eg VIA Social Cohesion planned a whole school end of year ceremony and VIA Trust suggested changes to the time out room).

Problems and possible pitfalls

It has taken three years of strategic action to introduce a culture of staff collaboration and participation in decision-making; to redirect the school's focus onto student welfare and learning, and to initiate methods of enabling authentic student participation. However, the retelling of the tactics that have enabled us to progress this far has several inherent dangers.

The description of the underlying thinking and the change processes presents change merely as a managerial approach which, with adequate resourcing and appropriate professional development, results in the eventual achievement of the desired outcome. This brief overview of events at Woodville has not explored the human and emotional aspects of the changes. It has not conveyed the concerns or resistance of individual staff members and has only hinted at the anxieties of many parents. It has not acknowledged that one particular group of students was disenfranchised by, and therefore disenchanted with, the new student participation structures.

Children who currently received many rewards and much recognition under the existing ways of operation may be reluctant to pursue the recommendations proposed by some of their peers. (Howard and Johnson, 2002)

Students who were academically able, popular with their peers and in their last year of primary school had looked forward to becoming the executive members of the SRC. Many of them had ambitions of being the presidents of this exclusive group and felt that they were not valued in the new processes.

Future possibilities for student participation at Woodville

The introduction of student voice at Woodville has been systematic and sustained. For it to be extended so that working in partnership with students is an established way of operating, several interrelated factors need to be considered. These include the allocation of human, financial and physical resources, congruence of all the school's structures and systems; and staff commitment to student voice.



Resourcing

The VES grant enabled four pairs of teachers to be released to support a structure that created greater staff and student involvement, and increased ownership of student voice structures. With the conclusion of the funded project, the additional resourcing for teacher release has ceased, posing significant questions about the sustainability of this approach to school change.

- How important is it to have more than one staff member leading this aspect of the school's work?
- How important is it for staff to continue to work in pairs (or small teams) with students in this way?
- How would students interpret the reduction of this approach?
- How could the involvement of several teachers be maintained?

If student voice is to be authentic, another financial consideration is submissions by the students through the school's budget for funding to enact some of their proposals. This raises the more specific and highly significant question about the extent to which the school's complex budgeting processes should be shared with students. It further raises a larger issue about the transparency of the budget process for adults, how well informed staff members are about the financial operations of the school and how confident they would be in teaching this to students.

The continued regular meeting of four VIA groups will necessitate designated spaces in which they can gather. Apart from the practical organisational considerations, the creation and naming of a meeting place will make visible the importance of VIA and will enable students to develop

their collective identity and autonomy as agents of change (Thomson and Holdsworth, 2003). However, there is already considerable competition from many specialist programs needing work spaces in a crowded school.

Competing systemic demands, conflicting expectations from within the school community and a shrinking resource pool may challenge the continued long-term allocation of appropriate human, financial and physical resources to student participation.

Congruence of school's structures and systems

Closely aligned with appropriate resourcing for genuine student participation is the challenge of ensuring that student voice is not a single, unrelated program. Instead, principles of student voice need to permeate every aspect of the school's organisation and operation.

Student councils may engender the perception that students are actively involved in their school when, in practice, their voices may be restricted to formal, hierarchical meetings with agendas set by adults. In such circumstances, students are not informed of or engaged in everyday decision-making about their classroom, school, learning or teaching. Similarly, the creation of VIA groups at Woodville may promote the perception that student participation is addressed by these four groups. The danger is that the community is therefore absolved of further responsibility to look critically at what is actually occurring in all aspects of the school. If student voice was limited to the formal business of VIA meetings, even with enthusiastic support from all classes for each of the VIA, claims of enabling students to work in partnership with other members of the school community would be overstated. Some questions which will assist our critical reflection on the degree to which student voice permeates the school's operations include:

- Have students been informed about this? (eg via special events, concerns raised at staff meeting or Governing Council, changes to grounds and facilities)
- What student consultation process is in place for the review of policy and practice? (eg homework, time out room, appeal against suspension, dress code, bell times)
- What does this process, practice or facility say about students and their position/role/opinions? (eg students prohibited from entering certain areas such as office and staffroom, classrooms before school)
- How do adults respond to students' enquiries about the reasons for certain expectations?
- Is there a process for students to resolve unfair behaviour from adults?
- What impact has student participation had on decision-making and school change?

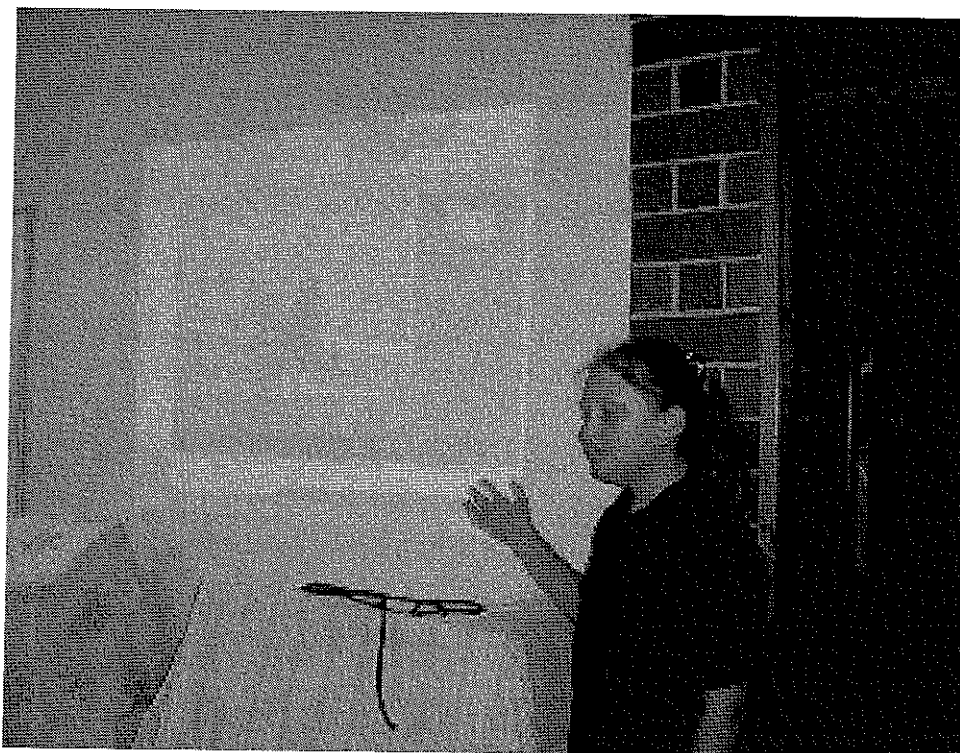
Each of these questions interrogates many of the routine customs of the school and will assist us to be alert to Alderson's caution:

...children have well-tuned antennae for tokenism and inauthenticity. (Alderson, 2000, p 244)

Staff commitment to student voice

I acknowledged the importance of staff understanding of and commitment to student participation by:

- deliberately structuring collaborative experiences for staff;
- making explicit the purposes and processes of participatory decision-making;
- providing opportunities for staff to develop the skills required to enable them to contribute to decision-making; and
- making clear the links between student participation and constructivist learning theories.



By allowing time for staff to become familiar with the principles and practices of participation, while simultaneously gradually introducing structures to promote greater student engagement, I aimed to ensure that staff members were skilled in the techniques, knowledgeable about the methods and increasingly convinced of the value of student voice. However, during the three years since I have been at Woodville, there has been considerable staff turnover. Some vacancies were caused by staff members deciding they did not wish to remain at the school, some resigned from DECS and others were the result

of our practice of encouraging teachers to apply for promotion positions. Combined with illness, limited tenure and a variable staffing formula, these factors resulted in 12 new staff members in 2003. Although an evenly paced, sequential approach to student participation has been in practice for three years, a significant proportion of staff has not participated in all of it.

Further, it cannot be assumed that increased staff understanding and development of expertise automatically leads to greater belief in the importance of student participation. Their long-held beliefs about children and their expertise may continue to challenge our advocacy of student voice.

Even those who have endorsed Epstein's claim that "children's abilities to make adequate judgements are much greater than we give them credit for" (Epstein in Walford 1998, p 38) face the dilemma of listening to what their students are saying, while at the same time trying to teach them to express themselves in acceptable ways. Teachers at Woodville take seriously their responsibility to teach their students appropriate ways of seeking change. Non-compliant behaviour may certainly convey student response but it is often unsuccessful in achieving the desired outcome for the student. Within the context of busy classrooms with a multiplicity of competing demands, there is a tendency to disregard underlying causes of behaviour and focus instead on only the overt behaviour. Another difficulty is for staff to listen to the message when students are telling us something we don't want to hear. Considering the following questions may assist them in listening to what the students are saying:

- Are there opportunities for informal as well as formal conversations with individual students?
- Have we structures in place which encourage us to consider and discuss with the student, non-compliant and disruptive behaviours?
- As a whole staff do we examine aspects of students' school experiences to identify those school structures that may generate undesired behaviours?
- Have we processes in place to enable us to reflect on challenging feedback?

Enacting the advice of Hill and his colleagues, who use children's own words in summarising ways to include their perspectives, may support adults at Woodville in their endeavour to hear what children are saying.

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN.... stop and give time to children, look at children to give them attention and listen much more completely to what children are saying. (Hill, 1998, p 12)

Kaye Johnson

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Kaye Johnson is Principal of Woodville Primary School in Adelaide, South Australia. This article is extracted, with her permission, from the longer paper: *Children's Voices: Pupil leadership in primary schools*, published by the UK National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 2004. The complete paper can be found on the NCSL website: <http://www.ncsl.org.uk>
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VicSRC State Secondary Student Congress:

Coming Soon

More information next issue

A Student Action Team: Investigating & supporting ... learning that makes a difference to someone

Developing from my involvement in the *Discovering Democracy* Grants Program, I have become more informed about the importance of providing an environment for active student engagement in our schools.

I am Student Wellbeing Coordinator at St Charles, a primary school in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Here I was well supported by our principal, Gunnar Rasmussen, as I ventured to explore how our community would benefit by more participation of our students in all decision making areas of our school. *Connect* magazine provided many strategies for us to look at to see what would be the 'best fit' for our community.

One of the approaches we undertook in 2003 was to set up a Student Action Team (see a short article about this in *Connect* 145-146, February-April 2004). Students in grade 5/6 were briefed about what a Student Action Team was and were invited to apply to join the team. Twenty eight students applied and eight were chosen (four from Grade 5 and four from Grade 6). The students met and brainstormed what project they would choose to be involved in - something they could undertake to make a difference to something they cared about profoundly. The consensus was to investigate the needs of St. Gemma's school for disabled children in Papua New Guinea.

We invited Kate Wilde from Manningham Youth and Family Services to join the team as a mentor and asked her to run a training session for the team members on group rules, public speaking, organisational skills and responsibility for delegated tasks. The students benefited greatly from this training as it empowered them to be confident, active team members.

The team members then researched Papua New Guinea and the school; they made contact with Brother Jim who runs the school and discussed what their immediate needs were. This information was shared with our school community through

assemblies, the newsletter and through speaking at staff meetings and the school Education Board. These roles were shared by all team members. The team members wrote up their research and this document was put into the school library.

Through their consultation with Brother Jim, they found that stationery was in great need at the school. The team set about organising for our school community to donate pencils, exercise books, rulers, rubbers and so on. They then approached local businesses to also contribute. Four crates of materials were sent to PNG.

In 2004, four members of the Student Action Team moved to secondary school and four new members joined the team. After ongoing contact with Brother Jim and the children at St. Gemma's, the team took on the responsibility to supply software for the school. The team contacted computer companies, held a sausage sizzle at school with the assistance of Doncaster Police (who helped with the cooking) and support of local businesses (who donated sausages, bread and so on) and met with Councillor Gerry Dale from Manningham Council to see what the council would do to help. They wrote many letters and made many phone calls, sometimes ending in frustration as they had to realise that their dream to help the children wasn't everyone's. However, during 2004 the team was able to organise 14 computers for the school and also raised \$1500 which bought software for the children to use on these computers.

The team continues to have regular contact with Brother Jim and the children as they begin to set their goals for 2005.

The team makes their own decisions and sets out how best to implement these decisions. I sit in on meetings and observe and am constantly amazed at what wonderful active citizens these young people are.

Sue Cahill

Student Wellbeing Coordinator
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Professional Development Seminars:

Form One Lane

We are very pleased to announce that **Form One Lane** is happening again and now it's happening all over the place!

Form One Lane has been running over the past six years in Victoria, South Australia and Canberra, and each time has been a huge success. Teachers and students who have participated have described the day as very energetic and above all, inspiring. This is fantastic praise as **Form One Lane** was initially designed to do just that: inspire!

The greatest strength of **Form One Lane** is that students and teachers who are passionate about SRCs, and from a wide range of schools, get the opportunity meet each other and share ideas, experiences, obstacles and challenges, and together brainstorm creative solutions. Presenters and workshop facilitators are on hand to provide their knowledge on student participation issues as well as a host of other useful resources.

Form One Lane understands that each SRC is different and blanket solutions are generally not possible. So the seminar is designed with a high degree of flexibility.

After so many phone calls from around the country asking: "Why can't we have a **Form One Lane**?" we have at last got together the resources to offer this seminar more widely. We have also been keen to get **Form One Lane** out into the country areas of Victoria and this year we have succeeded. Check the list of dates and locations below and find the best seminar for you.

Form One Lane is a very popular seminar, so you'd better hurry and get your application in soon as places are limited to 40 people, and they have always filled up very fast!!!

If you are a member of an SRC Teacher Advisers Professional Association or you are part of an SRC network in your area then you are probably entitled to a discount of \$20 per head. Call us for more details.

Form One Lane: Adelaide
24 May Greenside

Form One Lane: Melbourne
Secondary Schools only
21 July City

Form One Lane: Melbourne
Primary Schools only
22 July Knox

Form One Lane: Sydney
26 July City

FORM
1
LANE

Form One Lane: Canberra
27 July Bruce

Form One Lane: Geelong
15 Aug Geelong

Form One Lane: Brisbane
19 Aug City

Form One Lane: Bendigo
26 Aug Bendigo

Form One Lane: Melbourne
10 October Knox

Contact: David Mould, Second Strike
Phone: (03) 9855 8900; 0412 743 951
E-mail: david.mould@second-strike.com
Web: www.second-strike.com



r.u.MAD? checklist What makes a project MAD?

- Starts with the students' values, concerns and passions and empowers students to take responsibility
- Enables students to imagine and create the world they wish to live in
- Gains understanding of the needs of others by connecting with communities/experts
- Builds on the community's assets or strengths (time, talent, treasure)
- Tackles causes not symptoms
- Is sustainable
- Empowers communities and students beyond the life of the project/funding
- Measures, evaluates and celebrates its outcomes
- Inspires others



Are you making a difference?

PASTA NEWSLETTER

42 - April 2005

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

As we begin our tenth year as an organisation, I would like to thank those members who have served on the PASTA Executive for the last twelve months. Not only have they given tremendous service to your organisation but also to the students and teachers who are involved in developing our student leaders. I would also like to thank those members who stood for positions on the executive for the next year. They are Ken Page (President), Charles Kingston (Vice President), Ellen Sheerin (Secretary) and Sue Page (Treasurer). Changes to the Constitution mean that we no longer have numerous vice presidents acting on behalf of various sections of the organisations, but rather committee positions to be filled as and when the need arises.

The last two months have been pretty busy for all concerned, starting with **Fresh Start** in early March. This was a professional development day conducted jointly by PASTA and the NSW Department of Education and Training. While numbers were not as high as we would have liked, all who participated felt that they had gained valuable information from the day. So high was the interest that we decided to hold a more practically oriented day on Friday, 28th October. If you couldn't make the first day, then perhaps we will see you for the next one.

Over Easter, we hosted a group of 16 students and four advisers from

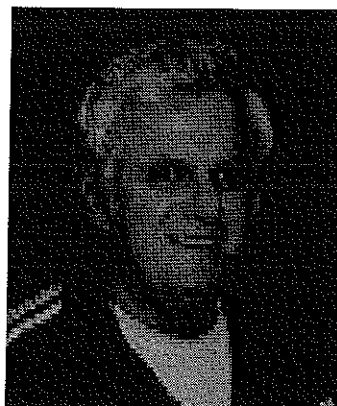
the United States of America. This mini-exchange program has developed from our attendance at the US national leadership programs over the last eight years. During this visit, the group was hosted by the students and staff of both Narara Valley High School and Asquith Girls High School. A highlight of the visit was the SkillShare day held at Asquith Girls. Attended by students from a number of schools, it allowed both groups to showcase how their different systems assisted students to develop their leadership skills. I would sincerely like to thank the schools involved for their assistance and willingness to act as hosts for this visit.

A distress call from an adviser saw me attending the second day of a two-day camp for her school's SRC. In her words: "I have just become the SRC advisor... Currently there is a SRC roll class however the time is limited and the SRC has no real role within the school framework. There is also no selection process for SRC students. The school does not have any other student leadership structures such as prefects, head students etc."

It was certainly motivating to see the way in which these students were able to attack the problem and come up with a solution that suited their needs. A thoroughly enjoyable day.

If your school is in a similar situation let us know. Maybe we can help you too.

Ken Page, PASTA President



Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

or contact the PASTA Secretary: esheerin@ozemail.com.au

USING GROUP ACTIVITIES Part 2

In the last issue of this newsletter, Charles Kingston spoke about the guidelines and purposes for using group activities, together with some things that we as group leaders need to keep in mind when working with groups. In this, the second part of this article, he discusses the role of the group leader and the types of activities that might be used.

Group leaders, or facilitators, can be teachers, advisers, parents, invited volunteers from the community or, ideally, students. Training and experience in facilitating groups is essential. A team approach and a range of talents works best. Involving your team in the planning of such activities - even a 'dress rehearsal' - is worth doing.

Creating a team of students who have been trained in facilitation and been through enough such workshops - and/or parallel classroom group activities - to carry out such leadership effectively, should be a goal of all sustainable programs. A camp and/or workshop training activity to develop such skills amongst students is at the heart of all effective peer support operations. It should apply equally to student council activities.

Before planning any workshop, before implementing any activity, the group leaders need to consider carefully the appropriateness and timing of each activity. The premature, repetitive or inflexible use of an otherwise valuable activity can lead to group members feeling that the structure is too manipulative. Leaders need to keep in mind that an icebreaker, an energiser or, indeed, any group management or development activities are simply learning tools, not ends in and of themselves.

Note, however, that when the focus is on training students and other teachers to become better group leaders, understanding this is the end in itself. It is through repeating the activity as 'leaders in training' that facilitators mature. The 'real' workshops then age them.

Although icebreakers, unlike some other structured activities, do not always require formal debriefing, the group leader should maintain an acute awareness of the development of the participants and of the group itself. Issues regarding disclosure, trust, team building, risk taking, control, and dependence should be monitored continuously. If an activity does generate notable reaction, whether thoughts or feelings, the leader must assume primary responsibility for tying loose ends or clarifying issues.

Types Of Group Activities -

First To Further Steps:

Icebreakers

Icebreakers . . .

These can also be referred to as boundary breakers, getting to know you activities, discussion starters or introductory developmental games or activities. Whatever called, they can be divided generally into five different types. Underpinning all of them is the need for development of trust: trust in the facilitators, trust in oneself, trust in the group. The grouping of these is based upon the primary purpose of each structured experience. Specifically, such divisions are centred around the following areas:

- **Openers and Warm-Ups**

Extremely versatile by design, opener and warm-up activities can be used in a wide variety of settings. The icebreakers in this category loosen inhibitions by stimulating, challenging, and motivating the participants. Developed to heighten the creative resources of the group, these activities often elicit intense, playful interaction. The group leader may use openers and warm-ups to begin a program, start a session, prime the group after a break, ready the learners for new content material, or shift the focus of study.

- **Getting Acquainted**

The 'Getting Acquainted' category contains icebreakers that provide the group members with opportunities to learn more about each other in a non-threatening manner. These activities generally solicit only surface information, i.e. work responsibilities, general goals and values, enjoyable fantasies, etc. Getting Acquainted icebreakers are ideal for quickly mixing the group and for lowering barriers.

- **Games and Brainteasers**

The 'Games and Brainteasers' division contains icebreakers that stimulate creative thinking, alternative perceptions, and the examination of basic assumptions. These activities often facilitate a competitive environment by pitting individuals or teams against each other.

- **Energisers and Tension Reducers**

The 'Energisers and Tension Reducers' category contains icebreakers that shift the emotional nature of the group. Most effectively used when the participants appear 'flat' or overly anxious, energisers and tension reducers require some mild physical contact.

- **Feedback and Disclosure**

The 'Feedback and Disclosure' category contains icebreakers that are aimed at establishing interactions of a personal nature. Going beyond mere introductions, these activities often explore thoughts, feelings, perceptions, impressions, and reactions. Cautious selection is advised for use in groups that are not directed toward personal explorations.

Charles Kingston
PASTA Vice-President

Raising the Profile

One of the most commonly asked questions by SRC members is 'how do we raise the profile of the SRC within the school?' While there is no one-step solution that will fit every case, there are some general guidelines that may be helpful if your SRC is in this category.

Earn The Respect Of Your Constituents

For an SRC to be able to work effectively within the school environment, other students must feel that the SRC is representing their interests. This will only occur when the student body is happy that members of the SRC are concerned about the issues that affect them and are showing that they are trying to do something to address them.

Start Small And Succeed

When you take on a project make sure that it is something that the SRC can manage and that it will be a success. A lot of small, successful projects will do more to raise the profile with the students and staff than one major project that flops. Remember that success builds confidence and that as the confidence and expertise of your SRC grows then you can start taking on bigger and bigger projects.

Publicity, Publicity, And Then More Publicity

It is very hard to raise the profile if no-one knows what you are doing. Every time that the SRC runs an event make sure that everyone knows who did it. As one student recently put it "make sure that our name is plastered all over it". Also, be sure that you keep a written record of everything that you attempt. It will not only help in future if you wish to repeat that event but it will allow you to look back over a period of time to see what you have achieved.

Evaluate Your Success

After every project, look at it objectively and try and see how successful it was. Be as honest as possible and be sure that you look at the project and how it worked and not the personalities and people involved. While you would hope that every project is successful, even failures can be a positive learning tool if evaluated properly.

Ken Page

PASTA MEMBERSHIP

Tax Invoice: ABN 49 398 096 539

PASTA membership gets you a full year of regular publications, access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing your real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs and advisors.

A full membership form is on our Website's 'How To Join' page at: <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

For now, just complete the details below and send your payment to:

The Secretary, PASTA
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263

NAME: _____

CONTACT DETAILS: _____

TYPE (inc. GST):

- ☐ Student/Concession (\$27.50)
- ☐ Ordinary (\$55.00)
- ☐ Organisation (\$88.00)

(indicate which)

USA to OZ Exchange Visit 2005

"When you can say that you have seen American football played in an Australian pool at 16° C, you know you have led a full and cultured life". Thus began an amazing visit.

The American delegation arrived with great excitement early on Saturday March 26. They were greeted by a few Aussies who quickly hustled them onto a bus bound for Narara Valley High School (on the NSW Central Coast). A quick trip via Bondi Beach for lunch and the City environs saw them meet their host families mid afternoon. The visitors were soon drawn into in depth discussions and exchanges of information as their families moved them off to vehicles and then home for the evening.

Sunday saw everyone at the Australian Reptile Park where the Americans were able to get first hand experience of some of our native animals. While some were excited and others traumatised by this experience most couldn't wait to get their photo taken with koalas and kangaroos. Snakes, spiders, crocodiles, birds and plants all added to their knowledge of Australia. A sausage sizzle for our guests and host families allowed for more cross-cultural exchanges to take place. After a morning spent with the host families,



they boarded a train for the very picturesque journey to Hornsby. Here they were met by the host families from Asquith Girls High School who were hosting the group for the remainder of their stay.

Tuesday gave everyone the chance to participate in a 'leadership

skills share day'. Representatives from a number of NSW schools came together with American representatives to share ideas based on experiences in the own schools. Differences in how SRCs functioned,



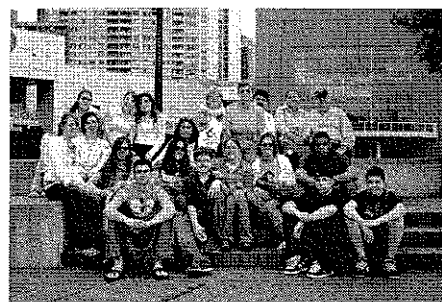
and how they dealt with issues such as the environment, discrimination, diversity and community involvement gave all participants a chance to gain more first hand knowledge about a different culture. This day was seen by both the students and staff involved as one of the highlights of the visit.

An excursion to the Blue Mountains was Wednesday's activity. It was perfect weather for a walk to view Wentworth Falls and the Three Sisters. A lunch break in Katoomba allowed the US students and advisers to sample a variety of Australian cuisine. After lunch a trip on the Scenic Railway to the floor of the Jamison Valley gave everyone an opportunity to look at exhibits of early coal mining activities.

The last two days were spent showing them the sights of the city. Darling Harbour, Paddy's Market, a walk across the Bridge from Milson's Point to the Rocks, the view from the top of Centrepont tour, the Botanic Gardens and the Opera House

were some of the highlights. Finally, a trip on the ferry to Manly for a dinner of fish and chips with the host families.

It was with a great deal of sadness that we waved goodbye to a wonderful group that we had become so close to in such a short space of time. We hope that this type of exchange visit may in time be seen as being as important to the development of our students as are the sporting, musical or other cultural exchanges currently being conducted by schools. As one Australian student said "it was a time of enlightenment and story telling that no-one would ever forget. We learned that walking down the street in Australia wasn't scary, that our houses are awesome because they



all look different, and that we will always have friends across the Pacific. It is great getting new perceptions and ideas about different activities and situations that are common no matter what country. Americans put so much enthusiasm into every activity, I hope it rubs off."

In conclusion, we would sincerely like to thank the schools, advisers, parents and students who gave so much of themselves to ensure that this event was the complete success that it was.

**The PASTA Newsletter is edited
by Ken Page and distributed
bi-monthly as a supplement to
Connect magazine.**

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

Year 9 Motor Mechanics Journey

We at Kambrya are very proud of our Year 9 program. I would like to tell you about one of our 'Journeys', but in order to do so, I will need to give you some background on our College.

Kambrya College was started in 2002 as a new state secondary college in the burgeoning Share of Casey in Melbourne's south-east. Casey is currently growing at a huge rate, with 50 new families moving into the area each week. When we started the school, it was named Berwick South Secondary College. We started with 96 Year 7 students, and as each year has progressed, a new year level has been added. Our 96 students just two years ago have now increased to just over 600, and we only have Years 7, 8 and 9!

Last year we changed the name of the school to Kambrya College. The name Kambrya is an Aboriginal name (similar to Canberra), which has the notion of a place of gathering, learning and growing. We felt this was a fitting name as it denotes why our College exists.

Our Principal was heavily involved in developing the Team Small Group (TSG) approach to teaching in Australia. Our College therefore has been built with a strong emphasis on letting the students help one another within small stable groups (the essence of the TSG approach).

In setting up our Year 9 program, we looked at all the latest Middle Years research. Historically, Year 9 has been the year of highest disengagement by students. We looked at what a great many schools were offering, both private and public, and decided to embark on a Year 9 program that we hoped would engage, inspire and teach students. In the program,

the students are given a choice of what we termed 'Journeys'. They study one Journey per term for the first three terms of Year 9. The choices this year were from the following: 'Materials and Design', 'Creative Writing', 'the Science and Art of Photography', 'Creative Landscaping', 'Music and Performance', 'Hospitality' and 'Basic Motor Mechanics'.

The students study three of these Journeys (one per term) for a period of seven weeks, with the majority of their typical school day spent on their Journey. Specialist classes like LOTE, English and mathematics make up the other sessions. The subjects that are not covered by the Journey (such as Science and Physical Education) are covered either in special sessions, or will be covered during Term 4.

In addition to our Journeys, we as a College are leading towards becoming an International Baccalaureate (IB) School. To obtain their IB certificate, students must also complete a Personal Project at the Year 9 level. The choice of project is largely left up to the student, provided the topic chosen is approved as being appropriate in terms of content and complexity. The students will begin their Personal Project in earnest in Term 4 of Year 9, and carry it through until the end of Term 3 in Year 10. It is hoped that the Journeys each student chooses will prepare and equip him or her for their Personal Project. One boy, for example, has chosen Materials and Design and

Basic Motor Mechanics as two of his Year 9 Journeys, as he wishes to build a go-kart as his Personal Project, and he saw these Journeys as being invaluable preparation for this project.

We also see the students starting their VCE in Year 10, and trust that their Journeys and the Personal Project will prepare them for this time. Obviously there are other small parts to the Year 9 program, but this information gives you enough detail to appreciate where the Journeys fit in and what they are all about. So, with all this in mind, I would like to share with you the Basic Motor Mechanics Journey (which I ran in first term of 2004).

The 'Basic Motor Mechanics' Journey

The whole premise behind this Journey is to teach the students the theory behind small engines such as lawn mowers, whipper-snippers and the like.

The students then work in groups of three or four to apply the knowledge they have gained to assess and repair lawn mowers and other equipment. Over the seven weeks, most of the groups managed to finish at least two engines.

In addition, I have a collection of old farm stationary engines, some of which I took to school to show the students. As you can imagine, these caused quite a stir!

Theory lessons

The emphasis was always on practical learning, even when covering the necessary theory. Subjects studied in this course included:

- **Safety;**
- **Basic engine theory** including two- and four-stroke petrol engines, two- and four-stroke diesel engines, and rotary engines;
- **Parts of an engine** and how they work together to make the engine run;
- **History** of the different engines starting with Newcomen's engine of 1712;
- **How to safely start, run and shut down an engine;** and
- **How to improve efficiency.**

Imagine for a moment that you are one of the students, and you are in a class with us back in Term 1. Today's lesson is on carburettors, a difficult concept for anyone who has had no prior knowledge of them. You are sitting in class, and we have taken down some introductory notes on carburettors (or 'carbies', as they are affectionately known). Then Mr Rogers brings out a HUGE plastic box, and pulls out all sorts of different types of carburettors, explaining each one as it comes out of the box: up-draught carbies, down-draught carbies, side-draught carbies, SU carbies, one from a 1929 Austin Seven, another from a 1980 Suzuki, heaps more from stationary engines and lawn mowers. By this time you realise that carbies are more complex than you ever thought possible, but you also now understand the fundamentals of how carburettors work and the principles behind carbies in general.

Over the next few weeks, I would review the lesson by taking a carburettor out of the box at random and ask the class to tell me about it. In fact, class interaction was very much encouraged, and we often dismantled my own stationary engines, particularly if that engine exemplified good design in a certain area, such as a well-designed governor system.

How does this Journey fit into the CSF framework?

I used to think that subjects like Motor Mechanics were very difficult to marry up with the CSF, but this was due to my narrow understanding of the CSF document! The four basic tenets for Technology that students are to cover are **investigation, design, production** and **evaluation**. These concepts are very easy to cover in the Materials side of the Technology KLA, as it lends itself readily to these concepts. However I thought they would be far more difficult in the Systems area, particularly in Motor Mechanics, until I thought a bit more *laterally*. What I came up with is the following, as it applies to the Motor Mechanics course:

- **Investigation:**
The students are given an engine. Most of these engines come from a local mower shop, and were discarded for unknown reasons. The students must investigate their engine initially, and decide what is wrong with it and why it was discarded. Clues are usually present in any engine. If the cylinder head has been removed and sent with the engine, then you can be fairly sure that the reason that the engine was discarded has something to do with the cylinder head, piston or valves. If the engine is complete but runs erratically, the reason for it being discarded may well have something to do with the carburettor or ignition and so on. An initial report on this investigation must be entered in the student's workbook, along with the justifying reasons as to why they feel the engine was discarded.
- **Design:**
After investigating the engine and writing the initial report, the students work as a group to **design a list of tasks they will need to cover to repair the**

engine. I didn't ask them to put their list into any specific order at this stage, but I did expect them to include any special tools that they may need. Tasks that required no specialised tools were put onto a separate list, so that if the students were unable to obtain a certain piece of equipment (like a wheel puller) at the time they wanted it, they could go on with the other jobs instead of sitting down and doing nothing.

Once they had written their plan, they then went back through it and **numbered each task** in the order that they would need to carry it out. In working out the order of tasks, they need to be able to justify their decisions.

They would then bring that list to me for checking and signing off before they were allowed to pick up any tools.

- **Production:**
Now that the students had a detailed 'plan of attack', they set about repairing the engine, according to the list that they had approved. If they found other problems that they didn't know about when they wrote their original list, they had to come and see me before attempting that work. The reason for this level of close supervision was not that I am a control freak, but because the students have never attempted this work before, so the scope for 'stuffing it up' was quite broad, and I don't want them to become discouraged.

As part of repairing the engine, the groups also had to clean out all the accumulated grass, leaves and other gunk that routinely clogs up cooling fins on mowers. The engine was repaired and put back together, and (with my supervision), started and run.

- **Evaluation:**
When the engine was finished, each student was asked to prepare a final two-page report, which was submitted for assessment. Much

of the information in this report had already been completed in the design report. That information was now copied onto the final report sheet, but with a new section stating any further steps that became necessary, as well as what each student learned by repairing that particular engine, and a half-page report that would stay with that engine (see box). It is hoped that each course will produce a number of engines that would make suitable replacement engines for people at the school. The detailed report would then give the future buyer an idea of what his or her engine was like, what repairs had been carried out, and any hints on how that particular engine likes to be started.

The students' feedback on the course

Our students were very enthusiastic about the Motor Mechanics Journey. During Term 1, I taught 18 boys the basics of Motor Mechanics, and they had a ball. They didn't like the theory as much (what else is new?) but they could see **why** they needed the theory, and overall thought the experience to be most worthwhile. Following are some comments made at the end of the course by a few of the students:

"In the Motor Mechanics Journey I have learned how the four different types of engines work. I have also learned all the different parts that make up an engine. The best thing about this Journey was that it taught me how to dismantle and repair an engine. It also gave me ideas for my upcoming Personal Project." (Joel)

"I learned a lot about engines, including the theory. I learned the differences between a two- and four-stroke engine. The best thing was finishing our first engine. It was cool. I also enjoyed the theory behind it. This Journey has made me into a better person because I can now do a basic service on my own lawnmower and fix it if anything goes wrong." (Ryan)

"I have learned how to take apart an engine and remove the piston. Because of this Journey, I have more respect for engines, and I can look after them more. The best thing was that we got to take apart an engine that was not going initially, and ended up getting it to run." (Brad)

"I learned how to pull apart an engine, how to seat valves, how to remove a piston, crankshaft and camshaft. I have a better understanding of two- and four-stroke engines. The best thing was working on engines and learning lots about Motor Mechanics, but I didn't like the theory side of it." (Craig)

"I've learned how to look for things that are wrong with an engine, how to clean and maintain it. If my car breaks down in the future I can at least suggest things that might be wrong." (Steve)

In fact, all the students stated that they had learned heaps from the Journey, and they are now far more confident in taking small engines apart and knowing what to expect to find inside an engine, whether it is two- or four-stroke in design.

Final reports

In the box is a copy of one of the final reports that would be given to the buyer of an engine. The particular engine in this report didn't run when they first got it, and the guys got pretty dejected until they discovered the problem. The engine, even after cleaning and reassembly, had no compression. Therefore we went back to the theory of compression.

Craig said: "Well, we know the piston rings are OK, because we've had the piston out and we checked the rings."

"Alright," says I, "so what else could cause lack of compression?"

"Valves!"

So I taught them the proper method of removing the valves and, by using a series of pencil marks around the edge of the valve, found out that the exhaust valve was not seating properly, resulting in lack of compression. They looked very closely at the edge of the valve seat and, sure enough, there was a tiny piece of carbon stuck to the valve. They carefully removed this, put the

Year 9 Motor Mechanics Journey Final Engine Report

Engine repaired and report prepared by Craig, Brad and Tim

Date: March 6

- **Make of engine:** Briggs and Stratton
- **Size of engine (cc &/or HP):** 3.75 HP
- **Type of engine:** 4-stroke
- **Colour of engine:** Black
- **Serial number or codes:** Model: 92908
Type: 518501
Code: 8806090

General condition of engine:

- **How easy is it to start:** it starts pretty well
- **How evenly does it run?** it runs very smoothly
- **Are there any defects that a potential owner should know about?**

The engine needs a lot of priming to start. Set the choke full on, then a quick pull on the role will get it going. It doesn't like being started 'hot'.

Report signed by: Brad, Tim, Craig

engine all back together, and off it went. They were rapt, especially when they realised that the guys in the mower shop hadn't thought it worth fixing. This engine is now waiting for a new owner, and when it gets sold, the owner will be able to ask Craig, Tim and Brad questions on how it runs.

Conclusion

As you have no doubt guessed, I am very excited about Kambrya's Year 9 program. Many of the students I had in the first term had been difficult students in previous years, but they loved their first Journey, especially when their engines ran more smoothly after repair. They were certainly engaged in their learning, and one student in particular came to me one day, keen as mustard, because he had learned the names of the engine parts. Another boy, new to the school this year and a terror at his old school, improved immensely and settled down over the course of the Journey, finishing with better than average marks.

Term 2 will see me taking a Materials and Design course, then I have another class of Motor Mechanics in term 3, before the Personal Projects begin in term 4. It is a shame that only boys have signed up for the Motor Mechanics course this year. I am hoping to run mixed classes next year, and hope to even have an all-girls class within the next few years. If the enthusiasm of the Term 1 boys is anything to go by, I shouldn't have too much trouble attracting students to the course.

Thank you for reading this article. I hope it has been informative and helpful to you. All the best with your own 'Journeys'.

Martin Rogers
Kambrya College
Bemersyde Drive
Berwick 3806

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INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

"The most overwhelmingly positive experience I have ever had." (Student, Cumberland HS, NSW)

Australia's future Prime Ministers, doctors, CEOs, teachers, entrepreneurs and community leaders will converge on July 6th 2005 for the **Third Australian National Leadership Camp (NLC)** at Collaroy Beach in Sydney to undertake a five day intensive leadership development program.

The vision of NLC is to encourage, equip and empower Australia's young people to be leaders of the future who use their gifts and energies to serve others, make a difference and reach their potential.

Leaders are important. Why? To change the way the world is. A leader is a cultural engineer. A value designer. They take us higher. They make things happen. They bring out the best in those they lead. Leaders hold the power to either enrich or weaken the world in which we live. Young people are the future leaders of Australia and are at a vulnerable time in their lives where they need purpose, encouragement and investment.

NLC brings together up to 200 young people (14-18 year olds) who represent every Australian State and Territory. During the five day camp experience these young people are given the opportunity to engage in an interactive, challenging and practical program which removes them from their normal everyday environment. The program highlights the importance of developing personal character and strength, and a sense of value, identity and purpose, whilst also enhancing leadership and interpersonal skills.

Our hope is that the young people who attend become more resilient, gain confidence and realise that it is possible for an individual to make a difference in the world. The impact of NLC however extends beyond the students who attend. The students are challenged as part of the NLC program to pass on their NLC experience to other students at their school and to leave camp with a personal action project.

NLC is an initiative of the not-for-profit organisation, Rising Generations Ltd. Rising Generations was established by Bec Heinrich and Tina Cameron in 2003 to provide dynamic and life changing leadership and personal development training programs for young people and to entrench a message of 'contributing' and 'making a difference' into Australian youth cultural.

We are now calling for nominations for young people to attend NLC 2005. If you would like to nominate a young person in Years 9-12 who you personally believe in and who has leadership potential, contact Bec or Tina from **Rising Generations** for a registration pack on: 02 9819 6262 or www.risinggenerations.org.au

"This has been the experience of a life time. It has made such a difference to my life." Student, Thuringowa High School, QLD

"I have returned home from NLC with a new meaning of leadership. It could change the world!" Student, Box Forest College, Vic

A beginning teacher's diary

This diary is not the story of one particular teacher, but represents a 'typical' or 'possible' journey in beginning some changes that increase student participation. It was compiled by Yvonne Wardlaw from the accounts of teachers from several schools - with some changes in order to protect the anonymity of individuals.

In this context, 'transformative pedagogies' refers to teaching and learning approaches that go beyond 'student-centred learning' and that might enable students to use that learning 'productively' to transform their communities ... including their schools.

Year One

Late May:

Four months in and I was foolish enough to say I knew something about transformative pedagogies... Everyone I knew said: "keep your head down, settle in to grade 4, don't take on too much in your first year, just learn the ropes and see who really drives the school." But no, I was too busy trying to make a name for myself and impress the visiting PD speaker – a very cute lecturer from Melbourne Uni.

After the presentation, the principal said I'd showed a lot of interest and decided I should be the one to investigate ways of introducing transformative pedagogies (TP) into the school and promoting it to my colleagues.

Only two weeks frantically reviewing my education subject class notes and checking websites and I've come up with a few good proposals. The buddy system dropped out of practice when the teacher who championed it retired. It's a known winner if managed correctly; it ought to be safe to re-invent that. Then there's the idea of friendship corners for lonely kids in the playground – I know that's worked well elsewhere, and it can't be too hard to find a local ecological project we could get involved in; what about making a school garden in the dead space near the bins?? I'd just have to sell it to the kids... The principal's going to review my suggestions over the winter holidays and said I should expect to get the ball rolling second week of Term 3. Brilliant!

Term 3: Week 1:

Well the principal liked my ideas, but said I'd missed the point: where was the student involvement? Where were their ideas? Just getting them to do

what I dreamed up wasn't good enough - hardly transformative, just reproductive.

He has a point.

Back to square one and a better re-read of my info.

How do you generate enthusiasm amongst a bunch of students who appear to be totally happy being self-centred and fully occupied with their incredibly busy worlds?

Term 3: Week 2:

I wrote a questionnaire and sent it round the 4s and 5s. No point including the 6s: they're far too involved in the transition to High School to worry about little primary projects. I had meetings with each grade and explained the questionnaire and what it's all about. I tried to talk the teachers round - little response. There seemed to be some genuine interest amongst the students, but their biggest concern is that they get too much homework.

Term 3: Week 3:

The questionnaires are trickling in: nothing particular to work with.

Term 3: Mid-week 4:

Startling results: the children have been highly influenced by a news report this week on childhood obesity and want to change the kind of food sold in the canteen. This is not what I was expecting; the children have generally ignored my suggestions and picked up other concerns. But like the principal says: "it has to be their ideas".

Term 3: Week 5:

Some grade 6s heard about it and wanted to get involved too; they said they wanted to make a difference before they left, and help with the buddy idea. They say they remember feeling overwhelmed in Prep and they know the High School has a mentor system and peer counselling in place and they think buddies could work well in primary.

My colleagues are sceptical on all fronts.

Except one: Kate started at the school with me, and she was involved in buddies at her internship placement, so she said she'll get that off the ground again. I shall handle the canteen project, which is predictably political: the canteen lady doesn't want the children involved.

I've sent out a message to other local primaries to see if we can get together and share

ideas, hints etc. There's no point duplicating other schools' mistakes; I'd rather just learn from them.

End of term 3:

... and nothing much has happened but a lot of hot air has been produced. The buddy thing is meeting with cautious approval, but the grade teachers involved won't give up any of their timetable, so we've a hit a roadblock. Buddies can only get together in their own time or whole school activities... very limited, a rather weak start.

Term 4:

A couple of goals with the canteen: two grade 5s attended the canteen committee meeting and offered suggestions for more healthy summer snacks; they also asked if brain-food could be available before recess for those kids who'd left it behind and needed something during the 2-hour literacy block. The upshot is that brain-food (healthy, nutritious snacks – almonds, dry fruit etc), will be available at the before-school care rooms, in packs prepared by the canteen and sold on by volunteer 6s for ten minutes before school. The summer snacks are also going to be made by extra parent helpers (dobbed in by their kids), so the canteen lady is now on-side and thoroughly supportive of our group.

Term 4: Week 2:

We've finally got a name:

SATISFACTION:

Students and Teachers in Synch for action

The kids love it, especially the 'in synch' bit. Hmmm. Very satisfying!

The brain-food sellers have told me lots of kids say they don't have breakfast before school. They've shown some real concern. I called a meeting of all the sellers and I let them do all the brainstorming and come up with ideas. They've decided we need to educate the students with a school breakfast. They've got to clear it with the head, then approach suppliers. I'm just giving them guidance and helping them access phones, admin resources, and checking anything they send out with the school letterhead. I feel a bit redundant, but it's very freeing!

Term 4: Week 3.5:

Kids move really fast when motivated. The principal's approved everything, the canteen and other volunteers have promised help, some of the local stores are supplying something, and a national chain are providing cereal packs and milk.

It's extraordinary watching the kids learn about networking; several school contacts have been profitably involved. The kids really know how to work the grapevine. Apparently there's a lot of kudos

in saying you got someone to give something for the school breakfast!

It'll be a whole school picnic if a nice day, with buddies eating theirs together, otherwise all classes in own rooms – I'm hoping for a good summer day...

Term 4: Week 4:

The other side of the obesity coin has flipped up: exercise. Some 6s have started an exercise trend. It began simply enough, just a few of them getting together doing sit-ups, press-ups, running on the spot, but now there's a whole gang that get together each lunch-time, taking turns doing the counting or timing. Some of the known gymnasts developed a routine set, with skipping and matwork, and they're designing a lunchtime fitness circuit which different grades can use each day. They have to organise the roster, the equipment and make sure that it's used safely. Lots of time setting up and packing up but they're really enthusiastic. We've set it up with the school/house captains taking one day each, and the newly elected 5s will take over before the end of term... we need the continuity for next year or the whole thing will crash.

Term 4: Week 5:

Several outcomes: at assembly the principal acknowledged and highly praised the breakfast and exercise groups. I got a mention too!

- Breakfast was a great success, and the buddies started off well together: bonus! The local paper came and the photo is up on nearly every class or corridor notice board. Very timely for enrolments too.
- Double bonus: at the staff-planning day the principal highly commended my efforts and said what an impact **Satisfaction** was having on the entire school community. I think he overstated it a bit, but I think he's got an agenda here. As a result, several staff have said they want to catch up with me about this 'transformation/citizenship thing'.

Term 4: Week 7:

Managed to get time with a few teachers from local primaries in a PD session on citizenship, some really good encouragement and advice.

Term 4: Week 10:

Final assembly: it's really tough to see some of your kids moving on, especially when they were great initiators/workers in your pet projects. The breakfast and exercise teams were recognised in front of the whole school and the principal said those projects will continue next year and buddies will be established again: Kate and I exchanged glances – he must have had private 'discussions' with the relevant teachers!

Summer Reflections

Here are some summer reflections - things I wrote while thinking about what we had achieved:

- *principal endorsement/enthusiasm has great weight with the staff;*
- *student appreciation/commendation has great weight with parents and community;*
- *the kids have to be interested, and believe that you'll let them drive a project;*
- *you need to be close when they run out of steam/ need help;*
- *when a wave of opportunity comes, ride it as far as you can; it'll drop you when it loses momentum;*
- *a school community is incredibly subject to flavours of the month, so identify those and see how they can serve the community in the broadest sense;*
- *you don't have to be in the centre of these activities - in fact if you are, there's something wrong;*
- *don't be limited by your imagination: it's probably jaded and stale; and*
- *expect to be energised/startled by your kids' enthusiasm.*

Year 2

First day back:

Two sudden retirements, a new appointment, reduced enrolment and here I am with a 5/6 composite. This'll really help **Satisfaction:** I'll be with the most active students, but I've got so much extra prep to do, my time is stretched as far as it'll go.

Week 2:

The principal wants to know how I'm going with **Satisfaction:** where does he think the time goes??

Week 3:

More pressure from the unrelenting principal, so I've called a meeting of all interested parties. I've told Kate she has to come and also told the school/house captains.

I remember this awful feeling that you have to try to make something happen: it's very uncomfortable at the beginning again; where did last year's momentum go?

Week 4:

There are some real motivational skills that I need - it's been uphill, but I managed to generate some enthusiasm by pulling out the records of last year's successes. This year's slightly reluctant group has

agreed to start up the exercise activities again, and I'm doing everything I can to get the PE specialist to work on school-wide attitudes from that angle.

Week 7:

Some AFL football identities are visiting to promote Aussie rules for grades 4 to 6 and, unknown to them, health and fitness for me across the school!

End week 7:

Health and fitness are flavour of the month again, with the emphasis on fitness.

Week 8:

Amazing - some of my newly inspired 5s and 6s made a suggestion to the parents' association meeting based on the lunchtime exercise and something a football hero said. The committee have approved in principle a permanent fitness track in the grounds, suggested by students, installed by parents and workers as a joint funded project between the Parents Association and the Building and Grounds Committee (with some local government funding if we can swing it). These children can move mountains!

Week 10:

As part of a maths lesson we set up observations so the class could calculate the speed of passing cars. The kids couldn't believe the cars that are speeding and ignoring the 40k limit. I suggested a follow-through activity (strike while the iron's hot), to write to the local MP and the local paper and tell them what they've found out.

No idea how this will pan out, but it's great to see the kids so passionate about something wrong, that they want to do something to put it right, and they've got the confidence to have a go.

Where has Term 1 gone? From a very shaky start, we're making an impression on school life and it looks like we can have an impact on the local community as well.

This is great!

Yvonne Wardlaw

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y.wardlaw@ugrad.unimelb.edu.au*

Correction and Update

To contact Cara Robb, who wrote the article 'Junior School Councils: An Investigation' in **Connect** 151 (February, 2005), you can e-mail her on:

c.robb@ugrad.unimelb.edu.au

In that article, the correct reference for Macbeath and Moos, 2004 was:

Macbeath, J. and Moos, L (2004) **Democratic Learning: The challenge to school effectiveness.** Routledge Falmer: London

News and Reviews

Designs on learning: Can student participation help us to make better classrooms and schools?

Julia Flutter and Jean Rudduck, two education researchers at the Cambridge University's Faculty of Education, are looking at how involving students in planning and design can help to improve the learning environment. The research is focused on how schools are providing opportunities for students to take an active role in planning improvements to school buildings, facilities and resources. The researchers would be very interested to hear from teachers, schools or project organisers who have been working with students on schemes for improving any aspects of the school environment.

For further information about the project or to give details about your school's work please contact Julia Flutter (email: jaed100@cam.ac.uk) or write to:

Julia Flutter
Faculty of Education
University of Cambridge
184 Hills Road, Cambridge
United Kingdom, CB2 2PQ

The project's website is:

<http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/svac/index.html>

Useful Article on School Leadership and Governance

The following very brief article from the US Education Commission of the States is recommended. It explores the benefits for students, communities, and policy-making bodies (as well as the challenges) of involving young people in governance.

Although narrowly focused on the US experience, it includes a very useful set of questions for policy makers to consider, list of on-line resources, and typology of youth participation in governance, ranging from models deemed to be least inclusive and supportive of youth leadership to more effective models.

The article is at:

<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/55/86/5586.pdf>

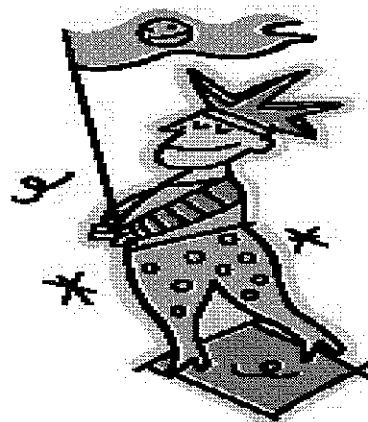
Nicholas Abbey
nic.abbey@iimetro.com.au

Children's Research Centre It's all about children by children

The CRC is all about children by children. Our primary objective is to empower children and young people as active researchers. The CRC recognises that children are experts on their own lives. We value the child's perspective and believe in promoting child voice by supporting children to carry out research on topics that are important to them.

The CRC is based at the Open University in Milton Keynes. We offer diverse groups of children and young people a taught program on all aspects of the research process followed by one-to-one support to design and carry out a research project. We also help them to disseminate their research findings, support a variety of outreach programs. It links to numerous schools and community organisations and exists to contribute to the body of knowledge on childhood and children's views. See:

<http://childrens-research-centre.open.ac.uk/>



Learning for Activism

Learning for Activism is an exciting new project supported by the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne. The research is concerned with the impact of learning on the knowledge, skills and values of young social and political activists. We are keen to meet with young people aged between 15 and 24 living in Victoria who are involved in decision-making and taking action in their school or local community.

The project would like to hear from anyone working with young people where the objective is to support them to take action on issues of interest and concern.

For further information and details of how young people can get involved, please contact Ian Fyfe by email: j.fyfe@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

I Was a Teenage Governor

Derry Hannam advises that the first two reports of this UK project about student associate governors (*in Australia: School Council members*) can be found at:

<http://www.ippr.org.uk/research/teams/project.asp?id=891>

Look here for the links to the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports, as well as for the press article.

Victorian School Council Review

In Victoria, there is a current Review of School Governance, which asks whether there should be a specific category for students on School Councils.

For a copy of the discussion paper, contact: 03 9637 3207 or check: <http://www.det.vic.gov.au>

Submissions must be in by May 30th, 2005.

Clearinghouse

Local and Overseas Publications Received

Connect receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on: (03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

Australian:

AEU News (Australian Education Union, Vic) Vol 11 Issues 1 and 2, February; March 2005

Education Views (Department of Education and the Arts, Qld) Vol 13 No 21; November 2004 - Vol 14 No 5; March 2005

Network News (Network of Community Activities, Surry Hills, NSW) April 2005

School Focused Youth Services Newsletter (Epping, Vic) Issue 21, April 2005

Technotes (Technology Education Association of Victoria, Carlton, Vic) Vol 17 No 1; May 2004

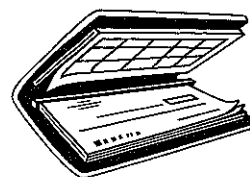
Yikes (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 4 Editions 1 and 2; February-April 2005

Youth Studies Australia (Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, Tas) Vol 24 No 1; March 2005

International:

Children Taken Seriously (ed: Jan Mason and Toby Fattore; Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London)

Education Revolution (AERO, Roslyn Heights, NY, USA) Issue 40; Winter/Spring 2005



Documents

The documents listed in this column may be of general background interest. A photocopy is available for research purposes. The length and cost (to cover copying and postage) is listed. Please order by code number.

A full, computerised index of these documents is now available from **Connect** for \$3; this can be accessed and printed by topic, key-word etc or simply sequentially.

Code Description/Pages/Cost

- | | |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 560 | Children's Voices: Pupil Leadership in Primary Schools (Kaye Johnson, Woodville PS; National College for School Leadership (UK) - International Research Associate Perspectives) <i>Summer 2004</i>
(35 pp; \$3.50) |
| 561 | Involving Students in Governance (Jeffery J Miller; Policy Brief: Citizenship Education - for Education Commission of the States, USA) <i>November 2004</i>
(8 pp; \$1.00) |

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- **Cross-referenced index to contents of Connect back issues (\$3)** \$

Miscellaneous Resources:

- **Students and Work** - 1985 Connect reprint booklet #5 (\$5) \$
- **'Youth Radio' issue of 3CR's CRAM Guide (1985) (\$1)** \$
- **Democracy Starts Here! Junior School Councils at Work (1996)** \$
- **Case studies of Primary School SRCs (\$7 or \$12 for two copies)** \$

Foxfire Resources:

- **Sometimes a Shining Moment (Wigginton) (\$25)** \$
- **Foxfire: 25 Years (Doubleday) (\$25)** \$
- **A Foxfire Christmas (Doubleday hardcover) (\$25)** \$
- **Shining Moments - Foxfire video (1 hour) (loan for 1 week: \$5)** \$

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- **Photocopies of the following documents:** \$
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